

Decision Notice

And Finding of No Significant Impact

Bedrock Campground Restoration Project

**USDA Forest Service
Willamette National Forest
Middle Fork Ranger District
Lane County, Oregon**

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Decision/ Project Description

It is my decision to implement a blend of Alternatives 2 and 3 as presented in the Bedrock Campground Fire Recovery Project Environmental Assessment (EA); see the attached map. This decision responds to concerns expressed regarding the proposed addition of some six campsites to the Bedrock campground, which is in a Late-Successional Reserve (LSR). This activity is in compliance with Forest Plan direction (Forest-Wide Standards and Guidelines FW-001 and 015) to provide for a wide range of dispersed recreation opportunities. Specific activities of this proposal include:

- Removal of about 250 fire-killed trees;
- Piling and disposal of slash generated by the tree felling;
- Replace two vault toilet buildings destroyed by the fire;
- Replace picnic tables, fire rings, and fences damaged or destroyed by the fire or fire suppression activities;
- Plant trees and manage vegetation re-growth to begin the replacement of vegetation killed by the fire to foster a quality recreational experience;
- Place traffic control structures, such as large rocks or logs, to prevent foot and vehicle traffic from disturbing recovering ground vegetation in the campground and adjacent day-use area, to separate sites, and to better define the trail network in the campground;
- Resurface the campground road with a similar surface to what exists;
- Establish a new well site;
- Construction of a new day-use parking area along Road 18, outside the Campground and LSR and construction of an associated vault toilet building. To avoid day-use conflicts with campground use, day use parking restrictions will be emplaced within one quarter mile of the campground entrance, with the exception of this day-use parking area;
- Replacement of restrooms, picnic tables, fire rings, and other campground facilities damaged by the Clark fire;
- Creation of a trailhead parking area to the east of Bedrock Creek on road 1800-419, and elimination of the existing trail head parking lot within the Bedrock Campground;
- Replacement of the surviving but malfunctioning double vault toilet buildings with two single vaults toilets.

Implementation of this decision will result in a small timber sale to remove the fire killed trees, and will allow the Bedrock Campground to be re-opened for the 2005 camping season.

Rationale for the Decision

I have determined that implementation of the actions described above best achieves the purpose and need for action as described in the EA. I have not included the construction of additional campsites and spur road modification, which were initially proposed, in this decision due to the fact that it is not clear whether such campground improvements would be consistent with LSR objectives. Implementation of this alternative will allow this campground to be opened again to provide a safe camping experience and will

provide new parking facilities for day use to remove day use from the campground and provide for a more pleasant camping experience. This decision will also resolve sanitation conditions in the campground by replacing the vault toilet building that has smell problems and will provide a vault toilet for day users to avoid human waste accumulation around existing day-use areas.

This decision is consistent with Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Based upon the information presented in the Biological Evaluations for this project, I have determined there is a low probability of unacceptable environmental effects, and the mitigating measures presented on pages five and six will assure that corrective actions will be taken in a timely fashion.

Project Background

The Willamette National Forest Plan says the Forest shall provide for a wide range of recreation opportunities compatible with management area objectives and provide a safe recreational setting in developed sites. The purpose of the above proposed actions is to provide for pleasant, safe, and adequate recreational experiences in and adjacent to the Bedrock Campground in the future. There is a need to remove dead trees to provide for future safe camping experiences. While all trees posing an immediate hazard of falling were removed during the fire suppression efforts, branches of the trees killed by the fire have already begun to fall within the campground. Additionally, the trees killed in the Clark fire will begin to deteriorate in the next several years and will pose serious safety concerns for people staying at this campground for decades if they are not felled. These felled trees need to be removed from the campground to prevent the inevitable accidents, to keep fuel loadings low, and to get them out of the way of people using the campground. There is a need to replace the toilet buildings destroyed by the fire and to reforest portions of the campground and to protect redeveloping ground vegetation from disturbance.

There is a need to get this campground in a condition to open to the public by the 2005 camping season to meet user needs, to avoid detrimentally increasing use of other Fall Creek sites, to better control the recreational use of the Fall Creek corridor, and to meet the needs of the campground concessionaire to have a profitable operation by being able to provide a critical mass of developed campground capacity (see page 6, USDA 2004).

There is also a secondary need to improve certain aspects of this campground. Day use of Fall Creek in the vicinity of the Bedrock Campground has increased and day users have been parking in the campground and on the access bridge; resulting in disturbance to campers, traffic congestion; creating unsafe conditions; and creating problems of site control for the campground concessionaire. There is a need to construct a separate, day-use parking area in the vicinity, and to move trail head use out of the campground. There is also a need to develop a new well in this area as the existing hand-pumped well is too shallow or not properly sealed to assure water purity, and to replace the improperly functioning double vault toilet building.

Public Involvement

To determine issues affecting the decision, and to determine if a finding of no significant impact on the human environment may be made for the proposed action, the Forest Service conducted scoping, involving an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists. To encourage public participation in this process, the project appeared in the Willamette National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions, published quarterly, in the Fall, 2003 quarterly edition, and the proposal has appeared in all subsequent editions to date. The public was encouraged to provide input into this project during that time. In addition, a scoping document describing the project and potential issues was mailed to a group of people who have expressed interest in this or similar projects on the Middle Fork Ranger District.

Public comment on the Bedrock Campground Fire Recovery Project EA was solicited as per CFR 36 215. 5 from March 29 through, April 227, 2004. Comments were received from one individual representing the Oregon Natural Resources Council during that time. These comments have been responded to in an Appendix to the Environmental Assessment.

Other agencies and governments contacted include:

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
State Historical Preservation Society (SHPO)
Tribal Governments

Alternatives Considered

The EA addressed the following alternatives:

1. **No action:** No fire-killed trees would be removed and no improvements would be made to the campground, resulting in the need to close the campground to public use;
2. **Proposed Action:**
 - Replace two vault toilet buildings destroyed by the fire;
 - Replace picnic tables, fire rings, and fences damaged or destroyed by the fire or fire suppression activities;
 - Remove about 250 trees killed by the Clark Fire that pose a safety concern. These would include all trees within or outside of the campground that could potentially fall into the campground or high-use areas in the vicinity. Tree that could fall into Fall Creek or Bedrock Creek but still pose a safety risk to campsites or people using Fall Creek would be felled into the creeks but not removed;

- Plant trees and manage vegetation re-growth to begin the replacement of vegetation killed by the fire to foster a quality recreational experience;
 - Extend and/or widen some camp site access spurs to better accommodate trailers and motor homes;
 - Add some campsites if suitable locations can be found;
 - Construct a day-use parking lot (furnished with restroom facilities) to the west of road 1800.190 to reduce the disturbance of campers by people using Fall Creek for day use. This proposed parking lot site is about 400 feet east of the campground entrance;
 - Replace the surviving double vault toilet building with two separate vault toilets;
 - Place traffic control structures, such as large rocks or logs, to prevent foot and vehicle traffic from disturbing recovering ground vegetation in the campground and adjacent day-use area, to separate sites, and to better define the trail network in the campground;
 - Resurface the campground road with a similar surface to what exists;
 - Identify a potential new well site;
 - Move the Fall Creek Trail trailhead that is currently in the campground to the vicinity of Bedrock Creek on road 1800.419. This trailhead would be built to accommodate four to five vehicles.
3. **Tree removal and fire recovery only:** this alternative would provide only for the removal of fire-killed trees and replacement of campground facilities damaged by the fire, such as picnic tables and toilet buildings. It includes the first four proposed actions listed above in Alternative 2. It responds only to the public safety issue. The other campground and day-use area improvements would not occur.

Alternatives considered but not fully analyzed:

The alternative to leave the campground as it is and continue its operation is not feasible to implement. This would result in an extremely unsafe future condition as the dead trees deteriorate. There have been successful legal claims made against the federal government resulting from hazardous trees falling and injuring or killing citizens in recreational areas. The Middle Fork Ranger District is not willing to incur the liability associating with implementing this alternative, and it was not fully considered in this analysis, since such an alternative would not be implemented.

One alternative to address a portion of the purpose and need and the Public Safety issue would be to fall the hazard trees and leave them in place, once facilities such as roads and campsites are cleared. This alternative was not fully considered because it would result in a large number of tree stems on the ground, providing a rather unattractive recreational experience, unsafe conditions for children, and a potential high risk for fires. This alternative would likely result in large stacks of large diameter tree bole sections since the stems cleared away from the road and campsites would have to be put somewhere. Treatment of the slash created by the falling of the trees would be problematic as burning it would be risky given the large amount of large tree stems that would be left on the ground. This alternative would also be difficult to implement due to costs, as the felling of trees and clearing of trees from campsites and other infrastructure would not be subsidized by a sale of the felled trees.

Mitigation Measures: the following activities are a part of all the action alternatives to minimize any adverse impacts from the proposed forest management activities:

- Trees would be removed with equipment capable of at least one-end log suspension, and all machinery required to remove felled trees would stay on the existing campground access loop road or camp site spurs, except as noted below to protect cultural sites. Most logs would be moved using a shovel-type loader capable of lifting a log, once separated from the whole tree stem, completely free of the ground;
- Construction would occur during the dry periods to minimize the potential for soil erosion;
- Revegetation would occur on the areas disturbed by tree removal and campground facilities upgrading to minimize future soil erosion. Planted areas would be mulched to prevent short-term erosion; planting would include native grasses and forbs in addition to conifer trees. Planted trees would be clumped, protected from big game and human damage, and a mix of species, including western red cedar, western hemlock, Douglas-fir, and Pacific yew, would be planted;
- Noise generating construction activities would occur after July 15th to avoid the potential of disturbing the adjacent northern spotted owl habitat during the early (March 1 to July 15) breeding season.
- All off-road construction equipment would be cleaned prior to site entry to minimize the chance of noxious weed introduction;
- All portions of felled tree stems which land within designated cultural sites would be left in place to avoid ground disturbance, or heavy planks or other protective structures will be placed on top of sensitive sites to protect them from ground disturbance. In general, disturbance of Cultural Resources would be avoided or fully documented (professionally excavated and recorded) if avoidance is not feasible.
- All trees that would naturally fall into the Fall Creek channel would be felled and left in the stream to provide structural aquatic habitat.
- Flush cutting of tree stumps would occur where stumps would not provide barriers between sites or to prevent vehicles from leaving the road system.
- Trails leading from the campground to Fall Creek (in particular those associated with campsites 13 and 14) would be reconstructed to make the trail treads more resistant to erosion.

Finding of No Significant Impact

My review of the results of the environmental assessment indicates there would be no significant effects on the quality of the human environment if the Selected Alternative is implemented as proposed above. I have therefore determined that this action is not a major federal action which would significantly affect the human environment. An environmental impact statement is not needed, and will not be prepared. This determination was made considering the following rationale, starting with the context and intensity factors listed in the Code of Federal Regulations' definition of "significantly" (40 CFR 1508.27).

context: *"The significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality.....in the case of site-specific actions (such as this one), significance would usually depend on the effects at the locale rather than the world as a whole".*

The project will occur within the Fall Creek watershed. This project will have a negligible effect upon the watershed's functions and values on its own and in accumulation with other, past actions, including those of the 2003 Clark fire. The proposal also will not significantly change the way people use the environment.

Intensity:

1) Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on the balance the effects will be beneficial.

The effects of the proposed actions will be both beneficial and adverse, as documented in the EA on pages 14 to 21 but not significantly so.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

No negative impacts to public health or safety are anticipated due to implementation of the preferred Alternative. Implementation of the No Action Alternative would, if the campground remained open, have significant negative effects on public safety. There will be an improvement in traffic flow, sanitation, a water quality in the campground.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There are known cultural resources in the project area (EA page 15) and effects to these resources will be mitigated through avoidance and protection of sites. The area does not contain farmland, wetland, or wild and scenic rivers. The campground can be considered parkland, and the proposed actions were conceived to preserve the area's use as a park. The Campground is within a LSR and a riparian area, both of which can be considered ecologically critical areas.

The vegetation and topography of this area is typical of the Middle Fork Ranger District and no known ecologically critical areas occur, other than as noted above. Due to the above reasons and conditions, there will be no significant impact to the human environment in regard to these unique geographic characteristics.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The decision not to implement the originally proposed actions to add campsites and to widen and/or lengthen campsite access spurs was made in recognition of the fact that there was some degree of controversy as to whether such activities would impair the function of the Late-Successional Reserve. This analysis is based upon the best available scientific information and site-specific data. I am not aware of any credible,

peer reviewed scientific questioning of the methods used in this analysis, nor of its results.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The predicted effects of tree removal and parking area construction are not uncertain, other than the uncertainty of noise effects as discussed above, nor do they involve any unique or unknown risks. This lack of uncertainty is due in most part to the long history of management in this area which allows us to predict with reasonable certainty what the scope of potential impacts might be. To the extent that we do not know what may happen in this area during a 250 year return interval flood, a landscape scale wildfire, or a subduction earthquake, the potential environmental effects are uncertain or unknown, but this type of uncertainty is not unique in the daily lives of humans, nor are these uncertain events part of the proposed actions.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Given the long history of recreational use in this area and the current Forest Plan land allocations, the proposed actions will not establish a precedent for future actions.

The Forest Plan is the vehicle which makes decisions in principle about future considerations. Site specific proposals such as rehabilitation, expansion, and improvement of an established campground may create future considerations, such as if use increases above that anticipated in this analysis, but decisions made based upon this analysis will not directly affect how such future decisions may be made.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

Past timber harvest has created abundant young age class forests within this watershed, though all these created stands are well along in their development into dense, closed canopy forests. All these effects are within the levels anticipated by the Willamette National Forest and the Northwest Forest Plans.

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant cultural or historical resources.

No districts, sites, or structures on or eligible for inclusion on the National Register are near the project site. Known cultural sites will be protected

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act.

An EA was prepared for this project in part because of the potential effects upon endangered and threatened species and their habitat. The project area is adjacent to habitat which is suitable for the northern spotted owl and Chinook salmon, as

addressed in the Biological Evaluations and Wildlife Report. The mitigating measures listed above under the alternative descriptions were proposed specifically to minimize or eliminate any potential effects to threatened or endangered species. There are no physical impacts expected to occur to threatened species habitat.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

As mentioned in the EA on page 22, this proposal is in compliance with all Federal and State laws relating to environmental protection.

I find the Bedrock Campground Fire Recovery Project analysis and the effects of the selected alternative are consistent with the Willamette National Forest Plan standards and guidelines, the March 22, 2004 amendment to the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (Northwest Forest Plan), to change the documentation requirements with regard to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy. This analysis was prepared to comply with the requirements in effect prior to that date. However, I have reviewed the analysis in light of the March 2004 amendment and conclude that the analysis is in compliance with the Northwest Forest Plan, as amended. The analysis includes a description of the existing conditions, the effects of the project on existing conditions, and has incorporated the relevant information contained in the Fall Creek Watershed analysis. Thus, I have determined that the Selected Alternative is designed to contribute to maintaining or restoring the fifth-field watershed over the long-term. This decision is also consistent with various recent Executive Orders (see page 20 of the EA).

I also find this analysis and the effects of the selected alternative to be consistent with another Northwest Forest Plan amendment (March, 2004) to removal Survey and Manage mitigation measures standards and guidelines. The Bedrock Campground Restoration project analysis was completed before the above amendment was finalized, and I plan to implement this decision based upon the Survey and Manage protocol and recommendations in place at the time the analysis was completed. The project area had already been surveyed to protocol for applicable species; none on the original Survey and Manage list were found.

There are also no irreversible or irretrievable resource commitments as mentioned in the EA on page 20.

Short and long-term effects have been considered (EA page 20) and are expected to be similar to those described in the Forest Plan (page IV-176).

Overall, this project, in itself and considering the cumulative effects of past projects, has minimal effect on human environment when considered within the context of the local area. The Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan addresses the effects of similar activities and this project is within the scope and intensity of activities discussed in the Forest Plan. The anticipated effects of implementation of this project alone are not of national concern and are within the scope of those anticipated in the Forest Plan for dispersed recreation activities. The combined effects of this project with others are addressed in the Bedrock Campground Restoration Project EA and in the

Willamette National Forest Final Environmental Impact Statement and the associated Forest Plan, as amended.

Findings Required by Other Laws

I have determined that this project is consistent with various Federal and State Laws as discussed on page 22 of the Bedrock Campground Restoration EA. It is also consistent with direction contained in the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan, and its Standards and Guidelines.

This project occurs within a Riparian Reserve allocation as described in the Northwest Forest Plan, which would not be affected by the proposed activities above and beyond the effects of having the campground in its current location and the impacts resulting from the Clark wildfire. As discussed above on page 9, this decision is also in compliance with the March 22, 2004 amendment of the Northwest Forest Plan regarding documentation requirements related to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.

A Biological Evaluation covering Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive plant species was completed on March 5, 2004. A Biological Evaluation covering Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive animal species was completed on February 27, 2004. A Biological Assessment for Chinook Salmon covering this project was completed on November 3, 2003. This project has been programmatically consulted upon by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service on December 8, 2003, and consultation with the USFWS for effects to northern spotted owls was included in the Willamette National Forest's 2004 Programmatic Consultation. Implementation of the mitigation measures will ensure no significant impacts will occur.

The District Archaeologist has reviewed the project and concluded that the activities will not affect any cultural resources sites.

This decision has been reviewed and the analysis updated to comply with the new direction regarding Survey and Manage and sensitive species management contained in the *Record of Decision to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigating Measures Standards and Guidelines in Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owls (March, 2004)*.

Forest Roads Analysis

I find this project to be in compliance with the guidance for aquatic and water quality, and fisheries resources contained within the Willamette National Forest Roads Analysis (2001). This proposal does not proposed any change in the use of roads in the watershed.

Implementation Date

If no appeal is filed, implementation may begin five business days from close of the appeal period. If an appeal is filed, implementation of this decision shall not occur for 15 days following the date of appeal disposition, as explained below.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.7. Only individuals and organizations that submitted substantive comments during the comment period may appeal. Notice of Appeal must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.14.

Appeals can be submitted in several forms, but must be received by the Appeal Deciding Officer, Forest Supervisor Dallas Emch, within 45 days from the date legal notice of this decision appears in the Eugene Register-Guard, Eugene, Oregon. Appeals may be:

1. Mailed to: Appeal Deciding Officer, Dallas Emch, Forest Supervisor; ATTN: Appeals, P. O. Box 10607, Eugene, OR 97440;
2. Emailed to: appeals-pacificnorthwest-willamette@fs.fed.us. Please put APPEAL and BEROCK CAMPGROUND RESTORATION EA DECISION in the subject line;
3. Delivered to: Willamette National Forest, Supervisor's Office at 211 7th Ave., Eugene, Oregon, between the hours of 8:30 am and 4:30 pm, M-F; or
4. Faxed to: Willamette National Forest, Supervisor's Office, ATTN: APPEALS at (541)225-6222.

Contact Person

For further information please contact:

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/s/ **Rick Scott**
RICK SCOTT
District Ranger

May 17, 2004
DATE

Bedrock Campground Restoration Decision

Selected Action – A Blend of Alternative 2 and 3

